

## Welcome to the 'no affection zone'

If former Texas Democrat Governor Ann Richards were alive today she would be unable to resist making a few choice comments about everybody's favorite uncle, Joe Biden. I can see her doing a new take on her oft-quoted comments made about Republican candidate for President, George H.W. Bush at the 1988 Democratic National Convention: "Poor George, he can't help it. He was born with a silver foot in his mouth." She'd probably say, "Poor Joe. He can't help it. He was born with wandering lips and no compass." Yes, you know things are bad here when the innocent of innocents, Joe Biden, is called to task for a few hugs or pecks on the cheek. Gals, you have officially fallen off the kitchen stool, thrown Uncle Joe's life and legacy into the Cuisinart and pressed *warp speed*. I'm a conservative and yet I find myself defending the kissing bandit from Delaware. Both of Biden's recent accusers have said that they didn't regard his moves as sexual in nature, but they were somewhat creepy and violated or invaded their personal space. Okay, I'll take them at their word, but did they have a danger sign hanging around their necks so that old White guys like Joe had fair warning before he approached them? No, they didn't. So Joe, being the affectionate and playful type he is, entered their private air space, unprepared.

Now I want to be clear on this. I am not in favor of invading anyone's *private space* or forcing them into their 'discomfort zone,' but at some point we're going to have to lay down some ground rules before we call 911 and ask the SWAT team, the ACLU or NOW to intervene. This whole series of pop up surprise attacks on anyone who's ever snuck a kiss has gone too far. If we let this hysteria to continue unabated, we will need Federal legislation (something the Left loves) to prohibit kissing or caressing in public and the establishment of 'no affection zones' so that (predominantly) women can be protected from the more innocent advances of suspected dirty old men. Something tells me that the younger generation is already practicing the art of *flirtation avoidance* as our birth rate in the USA is falling. As a matter of fact, we hit an all-time low in 2017 (it dropped by 2% since 2016). If that weren't bad enough, we're experiencing the lowest fertility rate in 30 years. Log on to Life Site News at <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/american-birth-rate-plummets-to-30-year-low> to read the report from the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics.

There's a lot of speculation as to why we're not rushing to the boudoir in our PF Flyers anymore. Dr. Georges Benjamin, Executive Director of the American Public Health Association, said that fertility rates have been dropping consistently and "I think it has a lot to do with women and men, couples in particular, having much more control over their reproductive lives." He means birth control, I'm sure, not the other kind of control that every man claims but rarely exhibits. Where does that leave flirtation and all that stuff? Fargo, North Dakota in January? And how about the innocent good old affectionate behavior that we were taught was acceptable when people cared about each other? Have we reached the point where we must avoid all physical signs of affection and replace them with a few well-chosen words?

If that's the case, I'm afraid I see a world of flowery talkers (English majors primarily) dancing around a few stanzas of Browning's "How do I love thee" like leave festooned Puck from *In a Midsummer Night's Dream*. Please. And you can take Mr. Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice* with you, too? But what has that got to do with affection, you say? Well, I'm glad you asked. Probably nothing, except that I think our affection aversion pendulum is swinging back towards the Victorian era at breakneck speed. Our plummeting birthrate and hair-trigger response to innocent affectionate behavior may be indicators of our flight from sensibility. The persecution of Joe Biden may be just be the latest outward manifestation of our über sensitivity to male/female relations, but we must not lose sight that Joe Biden is not the problem; it's our mixed up mores and values that have been corrupted by people who'd rather live in the frigid environment of inviolate personal space than bask in the warmth of their fellow men and women.

*Stephan Helgesen is a former career U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in thirty different countries, specializing in export promotion. He is now a political analyst and strategist and author of nine books and over 1,000 articles on politics, the economy and social trends. He can be reached at: [stephan@stephanhelgesen.com](mailto:stephan@stephanhelgesen.com)*